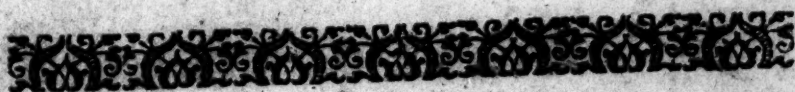


1/2 Over



Mr. *ELIOT*'s

Fast *S E R M O N.*

April 19. 1753.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

MR. ELLIOTT

FOR S. R. M. O. N.

APR 10 1853

2

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

An evil and adulterous Generation,

A

S E R M O N

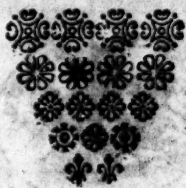
Preached on the

Publick Fast,

April 19. 1753.

By **ANDREW ELIOT, M. A.**

Pastor of a Church in *Boston.*



B O S T O N :

Printed by S. KNEELAND, for J. WINTER, over against
the King's Arms in Union-Street. 1753.

At the Court of Sessions for the County of Middlesex.

A

S E R M O N

Preached on the

Fourth of July.

April 19. 1753.

By Andrew Elliot, M.A.

10

23

Pastor of a Church in Boston.

399



Printed by S. Kneass, and sold by W. Miller, over against the King's Arms in Union Street. 1753.

Fast S E R M O N.

MATTH. XII. 39.

---An evil and adulterous Generation---

THIS is a Character, which our Lord frequently gives, of the Jews in his Day. It is said of them as a People, their Sins were general, so that publick and national Guilt was contracted by them.—They were an *evil* Generation; 'tis added *adulterous*. This may be taken in a twofold Sense, and was doubtless true in both. It might intend, that they were degenerated from their excellent Ancestors, they were not the Children of *Abraham*, which was the honourable Title in which they gloried: If they descended from him, according to the *Flesh*, yet in a moral or spiritual Sense, they were a base and spurious Race.

Or

Or else it may intimate, that by their Sins, they had been guilty of, what is frequently spoken of in Scripture as, spiritual Adultery. God had distinguish'd them from all other Nations : *You only have I known of all the Families of the Earth.* † He had taken them into Covenant with himself ; as he is pleas'd to express it, he was *married* to them *. This singular Goodness of God to them, laid them under the strongest Obligations to Holiness and Obedience. But their Conduct was in no Measure such as it ought to have been. They were guilty of great Impiety and Wickedness : The most shocking Crimes were committed among them with Impunity : The Heads of the People, their Rulers & Teachers taught them to err ; they taught them by their Example ; and there were many direct Breaches of the Law of God, which they, by their corrupt Glosses and perverse Interpretations, made the People to believe were no Evil at all.

'Tis true, they all this Time kept up a mighty Shew of Religion ; they made a great Bustle about those Parts of Duty, which would cost them but little Pains and Self-Denial ; they would not omit the smallest Rites, but they neglected the substantial Duties of Morality. This is the Testimony which our Saviour bears against them ; *¶ Ye pay Tithe of Mint, Anise & Cummin, and have omitted the weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy and Faith.* — They were guilty of Extortion and most cruel Injustice ; *† They devour'd Widows Houses,* but at the same Time they *made long Prayers,* and pretended to a great deal of Goodness ; under a Shew of extraordinary Sanctity, they perpetrated the worst of Crimes. This was especially the Character of the Scribes and Pharisees, against whom our Lord denounces many Woes for their Hypocrisy

† Amos iii. 2. * Jer. iii. 14. ¶ Mat. xxiii. 23. † Mat. xxiii. 14.

pocriſy and Immorality. — But 'tis evident, they had taught the People ſo; otherwiſe, they would not have been able to maintain ſuch an exalted Character for Piety and Goodneſs, as they did notwithstanding their Crimes. They had brought the *Jews* to believe, that Duties of the ſecond Table were of little or no Importance, if they adher'd ſtrictly to thoſe of the firſt; and if they believed this, 'tis moſt probable, their Practice was agreeable to their Belief. — Therefore our Lord ſays to a Number of the *Jews*, who boaſted that they were *Abraham's Seed*, *Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the Luſts of your Father ye will do.*†

And if we examine the Account given by their own Hiſtorian, we ſhall be diſpoſed to think, that our Lord was not ſevere in this Charge againſt them; that he has not at all aggravated the Corruption which prevailed among the *Jews*. — The Character which *Joſephus* gives, of the Impiety and Wickedneſs of that Age, is ſo bad; that One is ready to wonder, ſuch Miſcreants were ſuffered to live; that God did not immediately, by ſome ſignal Judgment, extirpate them from the Face of the Earth. — “It was, ſays he, “ a Time fruitful of all Sorts of Wickedneſs among “ the *Jews*; ſo that no Evil whatever was left un- “ practiſed. It is impoſſible for Man to contrive “ any new Wickedneſs, which was not then com- “ mitted. All were corrupt in their private and “ publick Character. — They ſtrove to exceed each “ other in Impiety toward God, and Injuſtice toward “ their Neighbours. The great Men oppreſs'd the “ People, and the People ſtrove to ruin them. The “ former were ambitious of Dominion and Power, “ the latter had an inſatiable Thirſt of Violence and “ Plunder.”* “It appears from hence,” as One well obſerves,

† Joh. iii. 33, 44. * *Joſeph. de Bell. Jud. & Dr. Lardner's Cred.*
Vol. I.

observes, "that the Corruption of this People was general." The same Historian says in another Place, "I cannot speak it without Regret, yet I must declare, it is my Opinion, that if the Romans had de-lay'd to come against these Wretches, the City, (viz. Jerusalem) would have been swallowed up by an Earthquake, or overwhelmed by a Deluge, or else been consumed by Fire from Heaven, as Sodom was: For it bore a Generation of Men more Wicked than those which had suffered such Calamities." And having mentioned some of the Crimes which were committed in the City, while besieged by Titus, and the Misery to which the Inhabitants were reduced; he sums all up with saying, "To reckon up all their Iniquities is impossible: but in short, never did any City suffer so great Calamities; nor was there ever from the Beginning of the World, a Time more fruitful of Wickedness than that was."—This is the Account which is given by One who was himself a Jew, and zealous for the Honour of his Nation, and the Facts which he has recorded abundantly prove them to be that wicked and abandoned People, he has represented them.

Indeed, we need no more than the History of the New-Testament to convince us, that the Jews were at that Time sunk to the lowest Degree of Degeneracy and Wickedness.—How base! how barbarous was their Treatment of our blessed Lord! A Man who had spent his Life in Acts of Kindness, in the most sincere and disinterested Endeavours to serve both their Souls & Bodies.—One who appear'd with all the Marks of a divine Messenger, and gave in-
contestible

contestible Evidence that he was a Prophet, and more than a Prophet; One who claim'd the exalted Character of the Son of God: What Ingratitude! What Wickedness! What obduracy of Heart! did it discover in the *Jews*, to abuse and persecute this great and good Man, this heavenly Messenger, this divine Person! To reject him, one would think, had been bad enough: But to ill-treat him, only because his Kingdom was spiritual, and he did not answer their ambitious Expectations from the *Messiah*; to thirst after his Blood, and in the most cruel Manner to shed it, was a Conduct so full of Impiety & Wickedness, as not to admit of a Parallel. And this, the Death of Christ at least, was a national Act: It was accomplished by the Rulers, the Teachers, and the Body of the Jewish Nation, who were conven'd at *Jerusalem* to celebrate the Passover.—It was the People, that appear'd before *Pilate*, and with such Vehemence urg'd the Crucifixion of Christ. It was the Nation of the Jews that prefer'd *Barabbas* to him; that uttered that horrid Imprecation, *His Blood be on us and our Children*: || and that compell'd the timorous Governour to an Act of Injustice and Cruelty, contrary to the Light of his own Mind; as he once and again declared to them. When I say, this was a national Act, I do not intend that every individual Jew was active in the Death of Christ, or consenting to it: Some, we know, were of another Mind; as the immediate Followers of our Lord, *Joseph of Arimathea*, *Nicodemus*, and doubtless many others who believed on him. But the Generality of the People, if they were not active in this horrid Crime, did yet consent to it: By their Presence and Connivance they shew'd their Approbation of what was done.—And after the

B Death

6 *A Fast S E R M O N.*

Death and Resurrection of our Lord ; how did they resist the Light which shone around them ! — The Evidence of the Truth of Christianity was stronger and clearer after the Death of Christ, than it was before. The Resurrection of Christ, the Effusion of the Holy Spirit, the Gift of Tongues, and miraculous Powers, with which the Apostles and others were endowed, were additional Proofs that *Jesus* was no Impostor ; but the promised Messiah : Accordingly some, who had withstood Christ himself, and would not receive him as the Messiah, were convinced under the Ministry of his Apostles — But the Nation of the *Jews*, that is, the Body of the People persisted in their Infidelity : Instead of yielding to the full Evidence they now had, they went on to maltreat and to destroy the Preachers and Professors of the Gospel ; 'till they had fill'd up the Measure of their Iniquity, provoked God to unchurch them, and to give up their Temple & City to such amazing Destruction ; as that he, who can read the Account of it, without Astonishment and Horror, must be devoid of all Humanity. — This being the Case, with how much Reason might our Lord speak of this Generation as *evil and adulterous*, and threaten to bring upon them, as he does in another Place, *all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth* ; * since in them, the Wickedness and Barbarity, of all the Persecutors that had ever been in the World, seem'd to be collected.

I have now considered the Words, as they relate to the Nation of the *Jews* ; The plain Meaning of them is, that they were a very wicked People ; that they were degenerated from their holy Ancestors ; and did not walk answerable to the Privileges & Advantages they had been favoured with. — I shall now take the Liberty

* Mat. xxiii. 35.

A Fast S E R M O N. 7

Liberty to apply them to our selves, unto the People of this Land.

The Character given of the *Jews* in my Text, is not peculiar to them. There have been others to whom it has belong'd. There have been *Christian* Churches, who have left their first Love, sunk into Lukewarmness and Indifference, and proceeded from one Impiety to another, 'till God has removed their *Candlestick out of it's Place*. Such just Displays of divine Vengeance have doubtless been design'd, not only to punish the guilty, but for the Admonition of others, that they might hear and fear, and not do so wickedly. Happy is it for those who take the Warning: Happy will it be for this People, if God's righteous Severity towards others, may lead us to repent of our Fornications, our Departures from that God, whose we are, and whom we ought to serve.

The Character, which our Lord gives of the *Jewish* Nation, does, I fear, in some Degree belong to us. If we are not so bad as they were, and I hope in God we are not; yet, may it not with Truth be said of us, that we are, on many Accounts, *an evil and adulterous Generation*?

'Tis a disagreeable Task, to mention the Sins we have committed, the Aggravations with which they have been attended, and the Guilt we have thereby contracted. 'Tis what no one would choose; 'tis what nothing should influence me to do, did I not think it absolutely my Duty, especially on such an Occasion as this, when we are met together to confess our Sins, and to humble our Souls before God, on Account of them. 'Tis necessary our Wounds should be laid open and searched, in order to their being healed.

Like the *Jews*, we descend from pious Ancestors ; the first Settlers of *New-England* were Men of exalted Goodness. They were not without their Faults, but they excel'd in Vertue.—What ardent Zeal ! what disinterested Affection to God and his Cause possess'd their Souls ! when they left a good & pleasant Land, where some of them had large Possessions, and sought in this *new World*, a Covert from the Storm of Persecution, which was raised against them : Content to dwell in a Desert, if they might here enjoy that Liberty of Conscience, which was unreasonably denied them in their native Country ? Nor was their Religion confin'd to those Things, in which they saw fit to dissent from their Christian Brethren. It had Influence on their whole Conversation. Vice was hardly nam'd, unless to condemn it. A Man might live seven Years among them, and not hear a profane Oath, or see a Man drunk in the Street : Such was the honourable Testimony which was once given of this Land. But *how is the Gold become dim ! how is the most fine Gold changed !* Oh *New-England* how art thou fallen ! We are not the genuine Offspring of the first Settlers of this Land ; we are a spurious Race, risen up instead of them, but very unlike to them. We are guilty of great Apostacy ; we have broken the Covenant, which, as we are a professing People, subsists between God and us.—The glorious God has favour'd us with peculiar Light & Advantages ; no People under Heaven have had greater ; but we have not made answerable Improvements : He has taken us into a near Relation to himself ; but we have been unfaithful to him.—He has tried us with Mercies ; perhaps there have never been more signal Appearances of Heaven for the Deliverance and Salvation of any People, where there has been no Miracle, than there have been for this.—He has tried us with

Judg-

Judgments, and we have been brought very low. But the Methods he has taken with us, have by no Means had a suitable Effect. "His Mercies have not melted us; his Judgments have not reclaimed us;" we continue as corrupt and wicked as ever.

There is to be found among us Impiety towards God.—A prevailing Neglect of Jesus Christ.—A great Contempt of the Holy Spirit.—and Vice & Immorality of almost every Kind.—What I have further to say upon the Subject of our Degeneracy, will naturally fall under one or other of these Heads.—

I begin with *Impiety* towards God. It must be own'd, we have the Appearance of Religion: God, we hope in Mercy, still continues our Candlestick, our Church State and spiritual Privileges; and we make Pretences of Regard to him.—We keep Days of Fasting and Prayer in one Season of the Year, and of Thanksgiving in another, as our Fathers did: But have we not a great Deal of Reason to think, that these Solemnities are gradually sinking into Formality and Hypocrisy? If we were in any Measure sincere, would there not be a Reformation of the Evils which prevail in the midst of us?

There is also some external Regard to the publick Institutions of Religion. 'Tis a Custom with many to come up to the House of God, on his holy Day: A goodly Appearance is then made in our Places of Worship; when *the Tribes* come up, *the Tribes of the Lord, to give Thanks unto the Name of the Lord, and to inquire in his Temple.* These Things are doubtless pleasing to God. But still, is there not an observable Degeneracy with Respect to the *Sabbath*? What Numbers are there, that wholly absent themselves from publick Worship? or whose Seats are often empty, when

when they might conveniently fill them? The slightest Indisposition shall detain them from the House of God; such as would not have kept them from paying a Visit to a Friend. 'Tis a Practise with some, if the Disorder is such, as makes Confinement necessary one Day in the Week, to wait for the Sabbath, as the only Leisure Day they can find; they think it much to give to God one Day in seven, tho' he kindly allows them six for their own Employments.—Many contract a Habit of loitering at Home, one Part of the Day, and think it a great deal, if they afford their Presence in the House of God on the other.—If we look round our religious Assemblies, how much Irreverence and Indecency are to be observed? Some set themselves to sleep; others spend the Time in Whispering and Laughing; and many by the roving of their Eyes discover the Inattention of their Hearts. They are glad when the Exercises are over, that they may have Time to mispend in idle Discourse; and, 'tis to be fear'd, many are able to give a better Account of their Neighbour's Dress, than of the Sermon they have heard.—Would it be thus; if we had a serious Sense of the Presence of GOD in the Assembly? If we had a due Sollicitude for the Welfare of our Souls? or remember'd that we must give an Account of every Sabbath, and every Sermon?—I own, I have a great Opinion of the Sabbath, and of it's Importance. I look upon the religious Observation of it, as necessary to the very Being of Religion. It is so far from being a Burden, an unnecessary Imposition on Mankind; that it is the greatest Kindness, to call us off from the World, which is so apt to engage our whole Soul; and to oblige us to spend one Day in seven, in Meditation and holy Exercises, which tend to fit us for that eternal State into which we are hastning. Were it not for the publick Exercises

A Fast S E R M O N. II

cises of that Day, we should soon lose the very Appearance of Religion.—The growing Contempt of the Sabbath is therefore, with me, a conclusive Argument of our Apostacy, and an awful Symptom, that we are like to grow worse.

Another Token of our Degeneracy is the Neglect of *Family Religion*. There are, 'tis to be fear'd, Heads of Families, who were never known to pray in their Families at all; and others who seldom attend this important Duty. The natural Concomitant of this, is a neglect of Family Instruction and Family Government. They, who do not make Conscience of praying with their Children and Servants, are not like to take much Pains to teach them the Principles of Religion; or to restrain them from many Vices they are prone to: We may well expect, that Children, brought up in such Families, will be careless and indifferent about Religion; if they are not dissolute and profane.

But if Family Prayer is omitted, is not *secret Prayer* much more? The Character of Men is not so much affected by this, as by the other; and therefore they, who have no other View in their Family Devotions, than a Conformity to Custom, or preserving their Reputation, are not like to be very careful about it. And 'tis evident, Men begin to lose the Sense, of their Dependence on God, for both spiritual and eternal Blessings. The former, but few employ their Thots about: The latter, they are ready to think, come promiscuously upon all, without the Direction of any super-intending Being. They therefore seldom or never retire to spread their Requests before God.—Ignorant and helpless as they are, they do not implore his Grace to strengthen and guide them; they
enter

enter upon Business, and engage in vast Undertakings; and scarce ever ask Counsel of God, or seek his Direction and Blessing. Thro' the distinguishing Goodness of him that made them, they are capable of Religion, of making their Acknowledgements to him; and yet they rise up and lie down, they eat, drink, and transact all the Affairs of Life, in this Respect, just like the Beasts; with no more Thot of God, than if there were no such Being.

Instead of frequently retiring, to converse with God in Prayer, and to seek his Favour: or, by holy Meditation to possess their Souls with a suitable Awe and Veneration of him: Too many cast off Fear; *they set their Mouths against the Heavens, and take the sacred Name of God in vain.* 'Tis surprising to observe the Degree of Profanity to which some have arrived; with what Ease and Impudence they can tols about the most shocking Oaths. Even our Children in the Streets are Adepts in this Sin; they can Swear and Curse without Remorse, and seem to vie with each other in this aggravated Crime. And yet Profaneness is so ridiculous a Vice, that none ever pretended to vindicate it: There is nothing in our Constitution to move us to it. The only Temptation I can think of is; that Men or Children, and in this they are all Children, may show their vain Companions, how bold in Wickedness, they dare to be; that they have shook off those Restraints, which others are, and perhaps they themselves were once, under. If this is the chief Cause of Profaneness, as I sincerely believe it is, what a disadvantageous Light does the Prevalence of this Sin set a People in? A Sin, which has its Foundation in Hardness of Heart, and scaredness of Conscience?—The Evils, I have hitherto mention'd, are those which are immediately committed
against

against God, and come under the Head of Impiety.——

We are in the *second* Place to speak of the *Neglect of Jesus Christ and his Salvation*. — Many begin to think, our glorious Saviour might have spar'd his Pains ; and that all he has done for the Salvation of fallen Man is unnecessary. — If they do not declare this in so many Words, yet they say that which amounts to as much. Natural Religion is plac'd above the Religion of Christ ; altho' we are evidently obliged to Christianity, for a great deal we now put under the Head of natural Religion. — The peculiar Doctrines of the Gospel are derided ; — The Atonement of Christ is denied ; — Faith in the Mediator, and in a future State, are look'd upon as of no Importance. — Morality is spoken of, as being all that is necessary in order to our Acceptance with God.

You know, my Brethren, I have always spoken of Morality as of the greatest Importance. But as highly as I esteem it, I think we set it too high, when we speak of it as all that is necessary. I own, *Faith, if it hath not Works, is dead, being alone* : And so are Works without Faith ; they will be a mere lifeless Carcase. — The great Truths revealed in the Gospel, and which are the Matter of the Christian's Faith, are at the Foundation of right Practice. Without them Men may do some Things well : But, I am persuaded, there is not like to be a sincere, universal Conformity to the Will of God, where no Regard is had to them. To be sure, if we may judge by the Behaviour of Men, they, who place all Religion in Morality, often show their Want of better Principles, to mend their Lives, and make them good Moralists. The Truth is, Faith in God, in Christ, and in a future State, is necessary to produce that Holiness & Good-

C

ness,

ness, which, we all allow, is necessary to Happiness. And this Holiness in the proper, the genuine Effect, of a Belief of those Truths, which the Gospel reveals : and where they make a suitable Impression on our Minds, they will have this Effect. To separate these Things, which have such a close Connection with each other, is to do the greatest Injury to the Cause of Virtue : And if Principles, which tend to this, prevail ; instead of the Increase of Morality, I do expect it will be banished from among us.

There are others ; who although they do not avow such Tenets, and have an orthodox Creed ; do yet greatly affront and dishonour our Lord Jesus Christ ; they slight his Invitations, reject his Offers, and break his Laws. Alas ! How few have cordially submitted to this glorious Saviour ! They prefer the Enjoyments of Time and Sense to those infinitely more valuable Blessings he has to bestow. They suffer their Hearts to be wholly taken up with the Cares and Pleasures of Life ; and act, as if they had nothing to fear, or hope for, from him ; altho' such great Promises are made to those who submit to him, and such amazing Threatnings are denounced against those, who reject and disobey him.

There are great Numbers, who have never publickly profess'd themselves the Disciples of Christ. The Table of the Lord is contemned ; but few come to seal their Engagements to be the Lord's there ; an Attendance on the Christian Eucharist, begins to be tho't a needless Thing ; altho' our Saviour has so expressly enjoyn'd, that we should *do this in Remembrance of him*.—In the Way, we have, for some Time, been in ; our Churches are like to come to Nothing ; there will be none to administer the Lord's Supper to.

It

It will not universally come to this ; Christ will have a Church in the World, and some to *shew* his *Death*, until he comes : But this may be the Case with us, Christ may unchurch us, as he has done the seven once flourishing Churches of *Asia*, and many other. The present State of Things among us, in this Respect, certainly argues a great Declension.—Things did not use to be so in *New-England*.

If to the Things already mentioned, we add in the *Third Place*, the *Contempt* that is poured on the *Holy Spirit*, our Degeneracy will be still more evident.—There is no Truth in the whole Bible, written in fairer Characters ; than the necessity of the Spirit's Influence, to fit us for the Service of God here, and a State of Happiness with him hereafter : And a little Acquaintance with ourselves, would bring us to see our own Weakness, and Need of the Assistance of this divine Agent.—But, in how many Ways is this glorious Person grieved and offended ? The Powers of Man are exalted above Measure ; the Necessity of divine Influence is denied ; the Operations of the Spirit in the Minds of Men are despis'd ; his Motions are resisted ; his Convictions, which ought to be carefully cherished, are stifled & suppress'd.—Ev'n true Christians are not enough sensible, of their Dependence on the Spirit of God, for Supplies of Grace and Strength ; they do not consider, as they ought, that they are the *Temples of the Holy Ghost* ; and often by an unsuitable Carriage grieve and offend him.—To this Disrespect, with which the divine Spirit is treated, our Degeneracy is in a great Measure owing ; and 'tis the more melancholly ; as, if ever we are recover'd out of our declining State, it must be by his powerful Agency. But who can with Reason expect so great a Favour ; while we, in the grossest Manner, displease and affront him ?

Again, *Fourthly*, Our Guilt is encreased by the *Immoralities* which abound in our Land.— Crimes which were not mentioned among our Fathers, are now so common, that they are scarce observ'd : Or if observ'd, not discountenanced as they ought to be. To instance in a few Particulars.

Intemperance is a Sin for which *the Land mourns*. — Once, our young People were forming religious Societies ; to promote one another's spiritual Welfare, and which were so many Nurseries for our Churches. But how greatly are they diminish'd ? Not above two or three in such a Town as this ! — But how many Societies are there of a different Kind ; for Gaming, excessive Drinking, and the like ? — I do not say, that 'tis unlawful for young Persons to meet together, to unbend the Mind, and amuse themselves and one another : provided, that under such Pretences, they do not go beyond the Bounds of Reason & Religion. But, if they were sometimes to meet to pray to God, and to discourse of the great Things of Religion and another World ; they would find it Time spent to as good Purpose. — Surely, to keep late Hours at a Tavern, is not reputable, to say no worse. If they are Heads of Families, such a Practice sets a bad Example before those, who are under their Care, it leads to a Neglect of Family Worship, and often introduces many other Disorders. If they are unsettled in the World ; their Places must be empty at the religious Exercises of the Family, where they dwell. — How many spend that Money in strong Drink, which ought to be expended, in the Support of themselves and Families ! — How great is the Number of private Tipplers ! Who hereby quench the Spirit of God, ruin their Constitutions, and reduce themselves to Penury and Want. Their Children and Servants are brought up in Idleness and
Intem-

Intemperance ; and commence Servants of the Devil, almost before they come upon the Stage of Action. Oh ! the amazing Account such Parents, such Masters and Mistresses, have to give up to God ! I add Mistresses ; for tho' they seem to be but little in the Way of Temptation ; yet, even the Female Sex is awfully infected with this Vice. Things are greatly misrepresented, if Numbers of these do not addict themselves to drinking to Excess.— 'Tis surprizing, what prodigious Sums are expended for *spirituous Liquors*, in this one poor *Province*. If Things are not greatly exaggerated, by those who are most likely to know, more than a *Million* of our old Currency in a Year. Surely much of this might be spar'd. I am full in the Tho't, that, unless there is a Reformation in this Particular, strong Drink will soon be the Ruin of this People. I leave it to your serious Consideration, whether Labour might not often be as well carried on without it : It was in the first Days of *New-England*. But if hard Labour makes it necessary, which I much question ; yet surely, tis not necessary for those, who do not Labour. Or, if the moderate Use of spirituous Liquors is lawful ; yet, the immoderate Use of them is sinful.

Uncleanness, is another Sin which prevails among us. There are some who dare to vindicate this Vice, altho' it is evidently subversive of Society, as well as contrary to the plain Laws of God.— Books, which tend to fill the Mind with impure Ideas, and to feed an unlawful Flame, are frequently, and with Pleasure read.— The Conversation of too many, especially young Persons, abounds, if not with downright Obscenity, yet with Hints & Innuendos which approach very near it, and equally discover the Impurity of their Hearts.— And how often are Acts of Unchastity brought

18 *A Fast S E R M O N.*

bro't to Light ! And then, a lasting Blot is left upon those who are guilty ; their Parents and Friends are grieved ; and all, who have a Concern for Virtue and Religion, mourn. But may we not fear, that many Deeds of Darkness are kept secret from Men ? They cannot be hid from that God, to whom the Darkness and the Light are the same. Indeed, as to some, they are grown impudent in this Vice ; they seek no Corners ; but declare their Sin as *Sodom*. There are those in this Christian Land ; if common Fame is ever to be credited, who avowedly live in Unclean-ness, and yet are not spurn'd out of Society. If they are not ashamed of such horrid Practices ; I know not why we should be ashamed to bear Testimony against them.— These Things prove, that we approach very near, to the Character of an *adulterous Generation*, in a literal, as well as a figurative Sense.

Again, *Oppression* and *Injustice* are Sins, which bring great Guilt upon this Land. Men do not consider what is right and fit : but how they may make an Advantage of the Necessity ; and, very often, the Ignorance of their Neighbours. The Labourer is defrauded of his Hire ; or paid in such a Way, as renders him unable to procure the Necessaries of Life. The Complaints, which are made of this, are not without Foundation. The Cry of Oppression is gone up to Heaven. And I am mistaken ; if the Way of Dealing, we are getting into, is not such, as tends to destroy the small Remains of Equity, which are among us.

I might mention, the Disposition there is in many, to make Promises, when they have no rational Prospect of being able to fulfil them. *Lying* or *speaking falsely* to put off a *Creditor*, or to make a good Bargain,

is so common a Thing, that Men seem to expect it. 'Tis become necessary, if a Man would be safe, to deal with all, as if he knew they were unjust; and to guard against Deceit, even when he has to do with those, who appear to be the best. You can't but be sensible, how much Difficulty this creates, in our Transactions with one another; and how evil must a People be, among whom there are so few, in whom we may safely confide?

Pride is another Sin of the Times.—It appears in our Dress, in our Furniture, and in all our Behaviour. Superiours treat those, who are below them, with Haughtiness and Contempt; and Inferiours affect to make as good an Appearance, as they do, whom Providence has placed above them.

Shall I speak of *Luxury*, or that Propensity there is in us, to gratify our sensual Appetites? Poor as we are, we live high, and *fare sumptuously every Day*. This destroys our Health, consumes our Substance, enfeebles the Mind, feeds our Lusts, and stupifies Conscience. While we feed and pamper our Bodies, we starve our Souls. — We all agree, that *Frugality* is necessary, to retrieve us from the Difficulties in which we are involved; but no one is willing to begin, and to set an Example of that, which every one recommends to his Neighbour.

Once more, *Slander* and *Calumny* are prevailing Evils.—We are not tender of our Neighbour's Reputation, as we ought to be. Instead of being faithful Monitors to them, when they have done amiss; we publish their Failings, and propagate every idle Story, or evil Surmise. *Detraction* is so common a Sin; that they, who are guilty of it, are hardly aware, they do
any

any Thing amiss ; and yet, there is none more injurious to Individuals, more hurtful to Society, or more contrary to that Love and Charity, which the Gospel so strongly recommends.

I cannot omit the encreasing *Rudeness*, and *Ungovernableness* of Children and young People : Their Irreverence to Superiours, and Disobedience to those who are placed over them. A Temper & Behaviour big with Mischief to Community, and tending to the Subversion of all Order, Decency, and Virtue.—

Thus I have mentioned some of those Sins which prevail among us. I am not sensible, that I have at all aggravated Matters. Sure I am ; I have said nothing, which I did not myself believe to be true, and which I did not think it my Duty to say. I have us'd plainness, because I meant to be understood.

After all, I am not charging the Body of this People with the Crimes I have mention'd. It is to be hop'd, that the greatest Part of us are not guilty of the more gross Acts of Immorality ; and that we have yet a goodly Number, who have escaped the Pollutions that are in the World thro' Lust ; and adhere to the Cause of God and Virtue, in these degenerate Days. “ But this,” as one observes, “ does not wholly excuse us ; for we are all faulty in this, that these Kind of Vices are” too much connived at ; at least, they are “ not sufficiently branded and put out of Countenance. They pass under “ *easy*, not to say, *creditable* Names. And so little a “ Sense have we of them, that a Man may keep his “ Reputation among us, tho' he be very vicious. “ This very Thing, without our personal Guilt, makes “ the Sin a *national Sin*.”— Especially, if they, who,
by

A Fast S E R M O N. 21

by their Office or Station, are called to it, do not bear suitable Testimony against the Evils which prevail.

I would be far from comparing the Rulers and Teachers of this People, with those, who sustained these Characters among the *Jews*. Blessed be God, we have *Magistrates*, who discountenance Vice, and with some laudable Zeal, endeavour to suppress it. And we have *Ministers*, who preach the pure Doctrines and Precepts of the Gospel. But might not both do much more than they do? And doth not the Backwardness of the one, to shew to this People their Transgression & their Sin; and the Remissness of the other, in punishing the Workers of Iniquity, tend to increase the publick Guilt?

Upon the whole, it must be own'd, that, if we are not already, we are in Danger of becoming very soon, *an evil and adulterous Generation*. Vice and Wickedness make a swift and rapid Progress; and threaten to bear down all Vertue and Goodness.

Would the Time allow, I should now go on to say;—*The Character* given in the Text, is a very *dishonourable* one. Such a sinful Conduct, as I have described, is, on many Accounts, unreasonable: It is to act contrary to all the Rules of Reason and Religion; and it includes great Ingratitude to God, who has distinguish'd this People by his Favours, both spiritual and temporal.

Such a Carriage is also very *dangerous*: It brought awful Destruction on the *Jews*. And God will visit for these Things, unless we repent. Who of us could bear *Adultery* in the Wife of his Bosom? And will God bear with our *spiritual Whoredoms*? He

D

may

may bear long, because he is Long-suffering and abundant in Goodness : But he will at length arise, and punish our Disobedience and Ingratitude. This has been his usual Method of Dealing ; and 'tis agreeable to the Notions which Reason & Revelation teach us to form of him. " Most certain it is, that God, as he has done to the Sea, so has he to every Nation, *set it's Bounds of Wickedness, beyond which they shall not pass* ; and when their Iniquities are at full, he will not fail to repay Vengeance into their Bosom. The *Canaanites*, the *Jews*, and many other Nations I might name, have been sad Instances of this Kind of Proceeding. — But when a Nation is come to that fatal Period, none knows but God ; and whether we are not already very near it, we cannot tell ; but we ought infinitely to fear. — Too evident it is, that Things are in a bad Posture among us, and our Sins are grown to that Height, that 'tis a Miracle of the divine Patience and Long-suffering, that we are not already consumed." — But there is the less Occasion, that I should enlarge on these Heads, as I have frequently consider'd them on former Solemnities of this Kind.

Let us then, for I hasten to a Conclusion, humble our Souls before God, for the Degeneracy of this People ; for all our Approaches to the Temper and Carriage of the *Jews* spoken of in my Text. — This is what our Rulers, according to Custom, invite us to this Day. This is the End, for which we *sanctify a Fast, and call a solemn Assembly*. Not merely to put on a Shew of Humiliation, altho' we should *bow down our Heads as a Bulrush*. 'Tis the Heart which God looks at ; and Hypocrisy on such Seasons as this, tends greatly to offend him. It is to deny his Omniscience,

Omniscience, and to treat him as if he were altogether such an One as our selves.

We have awful Reason to fear, that God has been provok'd by our former want of Sincerity on such Solemnities : Let us, this Day, call our Sins to Remembrance, and the Sins of this People. Let us think of the Guilt we have contracted. Let us labour to affect our Souls with a Sense of it ; to get into a penitent Frame ; and to form new and strong Resolutions, against Sin of every Kind. — 'Tis only by Repentance, we can avert the Judgments which are impending over us : And if there is true Repentance, there will be a Reformation of the Evils we repent of. This is what we must be brought to, or Iniquity will be our Ruin. God is slow to Anger, but he will not bear always.

The Way to bring about a general Reformation, is for each of us to mend one. We have every one of us help'd to make this a guilty People ; let us do at least as much, to make us a penitent and a reformed People. Let us make it our earnest Request to God, that he would bestow on us the Grace necessary, to enable us to walk before him in all holy Conversation and Godliness. And let us be ever watchful against those Sins which do most easily beset us. Perhaps we have been kept back from scandalous Crimes ; but have we not, many of us, our secret Sins ? If these are indulg'd, they are like to end in something worse. We all need to adopt that Prayer of the Psalmist ; * *Cleanse thou me from secret Faults ; Keep back thy Servant from presumptuous Sins ; Let them not have Dominion over me.*

D 2

Having

* Psal. xix. 12, 13.

Having first look'd to our selves; let us do what we can, in our respective Places, to reclaim others. Let us counsel and warn them, as Opportunity presents. If we can do nothing else, we can bear Testimony against their Vices. We may, as Prudence will admit, show our Abhorrence of their Crimes; and endeavour to shame them into Amendment.—It will be a glorious Reward of our Endeavours, if we can *save a Soul from Death*. It will yield us unspeakable Comfort, if we are instrumental of delivering our People from Ruin.

In particular, let *Heads of Families* endeavour to amend what is amiss at Home; by Admonition, Advice, Prayer, Restraint, and above all, by a good Example. If ever there is a general Reformation, I am perswaded it will begin here. If Men were bro't to take Care of their own Houses, Things would soon be in a better Posture.—But as the prevailing Dissoluteness & Immorality is, in a great Measure, owing to the Neglect of Family Worship, Instruction & Government; so while these are neglected, I cannot hope for better Times. There may be some refractory Children and Servants, who will not be restrained; but much Good might be done, by a suitable Care in this particular. And he, who has attended his Duty with Respect to those under his Charge, tho' his Endeavours fail of Success, may, amidst the uneasy Reflections this must necessarily occasion, have the satisfactory Thought, that he has delivered his own Soul. But that Parent or Master, who neglects to pray with, to restrain, to counsel and warn his Children and Servants, is, in a great Measure, chargeable with the Crimes they commit; and must expect to answer it to God another Day.

Let

Let us all pray for the Effusion of the Holy Spirit, on this ungrateful sinful People. Without his Influence, no Means we can use, will be like to have any durable Effect. But his almighty Energy can awaken us out of our Security ; reduce us from our Wanderings ; and make us holy. Yea, if he please, *a Nation shall be born at once* ; a whole People shall immediately be converted to him ; and from the lowest State of Degeneracy, shall be made a peculiar People, zealous of good Works. Such a Miracle of Grace, is what indeed, we are not to look for. 'Tis not according to God's common Method of dispensing Grace : He usually proceeds in a more gradual Way ; but it may not be less effectual. By the Influence of his Spirit, accompanying his Word, and the Dispensation of his Providence, he may restrain bold Transgressors, and prevent the Heaven-daring Acts of Wickedness, they would otherwise commit : yea, he can so reform and change them, as that they shall fear, obey and serve him. Or, if provok'd by the Crimes of any, he suffers them after their *Hardness and impenitent Heart, to treasure up unto themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath* ; yet he can cause their Crimes to appear detestable in the Eyes of others ; and so prevent the Influence of their bad Example. He can inspire the Virtuous and Good with Courage and Fortitude, to appear on the Lord's Side, against the Workers of Iniquity ; and by daily Additions to their Numbers, make them superiour to those, who are enlisted under the Devil's Banner. By these, and a Multitude of other Ways, is God able to stop the Progress of Impiety and Wickedness, and to reclaim a degenerate People. And thus, when he sees fit, shall his Grace triumph over all Opposition. An Event this, so desirable ; that, methinks, the Friends of *Zion* ought to unite their

26 A Fast S E R M O N.

their Requests with the greatest Ardency, that it may be accomplished.

If we are once, by the Influence of the Spirit of Grace, brought to a sincere and thoro' Repentance; God, even our own God, will delight to dwell among us, and to bless us. Things will go well with us. *If the Spirit be poured from on high, the Wilderness shall be a fruitful Field; Then Judgment shall dwell in the Wilderness, and Righteousness remain in the fruitful Field: And the Work of Righteousness shall be Peace, and the Effect of Righteousness, Quietness and Assurance for ever.*

F I N I S.



CONFIDENTIAL

TOP SECRET

1. The purpose of this document is to provide information regarding the activities of the [redacted] organization. This information is being provided to you for your information only and is not to be distributed outside of your organization.

2. The [redacted] organization is a [redacted] organization that is active in the [redacted] area. It is a [redacted] organization that is active in the [redacted] area. It is a [redacted] organization that is active in the [redacted] area.

3. The [redacted] organization is a [redacted] organization that is active in the [redacted] area. It is a [redacted] organization that is active in the [redacted] area. It is a [redacted] organization that is active in the [redacted] area.

4. The [redacted] organization is a [redacted] organization that is active in the [redacted] area. It is a [redacted] organization that is active in the [redacted] area. It is a [redacted] organization that is active in the [redacted] area.

5. The [redacted] organization is a [redacted] organization that is active in the [redacted] area. It is a [redacted] organization that is active in the [redacted] area. It is a [redacted] organization that is active in the [redacted] area.

CONFIDENTIAL

